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**USTR Barshefsky Welcomes Drug Company-United Nation Announcement  
To Improve Access to HIV/AIDS Drugs**

Ambassador Charlene Barshefsky today welcomed the announcement that five major pharmaceutical companies have entered a cooperative effort with major United Nations (UN) organizations to accelerate access to HIV/AIDS care and treatment in developing countries.

“Working together to improve the availability of affordable HIV/AIDS-related medicines in these poor countries is major development in the fight against HIV/AIDS,” said Ambassador Barshefsky.

“Intellectual property rights play a key role in the innovation and development of new drugs, but it is equally important to ensure that countries combating the spread of AIDS have access to life saving drugs at affordable prices. We must also work to improve access to care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS, strengthened health systems, and improved prevention efforts.”

The five companies, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Merck, Boehringer-Ingelheim, GlaxoWellcome and F. Hoffman, have joined UNAIDS, the World Health Organization, the World Bank, UNICEF and the UN Population Fund in this undertaking.

Yesterday, President Clinton signed an Executive Order giving USTR the flexibility allow sub-Saharan African countries to bring life saving drugs and medical technologies to afflicted populations as long as their actions are consistent with the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).

The Executive Order also encourages African countries to take further steps to address one of the worst health crises the world faces. Specifically, the order encourages all sub-Saharan African countries to implement policies designed to address the underlying causes of the HIV/AIDS crisis, to promote practices that will prevent further transmission and infection, to stimulate development of the infrastructure necessary to deliver adequate health care services, and to encourage policies that provide

an incentive for public and private research on and development of vaccines and other medical innovations that would contribute to combating the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa.